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Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 254 pp.

Timothy Clark's *Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* is only the second book-length introduction to ecocriticism to appear; the second version of the first introduction, Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism,* was published in the summer of 2011. Whereas Garrard's work is structured around eight themes – or tropes as he calls them – *The Cambridge Introduction* is far more loosely structured and aims to encompass more themes and texts than *Ecocriticism*.

In the preface, Clark provides a useful extension of Cheryll Glotfelty's oft-quoted definition of the field, and notes that ecocriticism is the "study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, usually considered from out of the current global environmental crisis and its revisionist challenge to given modes of thought and practice" (xiii). *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* is divided into four parts: romantic and anti-romantic; the boundaries of the political; science and the struggle for intellectual authority; and, the animal mirror. Although Clark does not give an indication as to why this order was chosen, it seems to be roughly chronological. Part one, romantic and anti-romantic deals with typically ecocritical texts and themes – the poems of William Wordsworth and John Clare, Thoreau's *Walden*, phenomenology and David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous* – but with a twist. In chapter three – "Genre and the question of non-fiction" –, for instance, Clark draws on Patrick D. Murphy's work on genre in *Further Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature*, and remarks on ecocriticism's traditional bias towards "environmentalist non-fiction" (38). Even though a chapter discussing genre may be surprising in a section on romanticism and anti-romanticism, it is a discussion that is long overdue, and therefore a refreshing addition to this introduction.

In the second part, "the boundaries of the political", the chapter on post-colonial ecojustice stands out, particularly because Clark explicitly frames it in terms of ecojustice rather than postcolonial ecocriticism. Consequently, he does not so much focus on the historical and contemporary interstices of postcolonialism and ecocriticism – such as ecological imperialism and neo-colonial practices in Third World countries – but on the extent to which environmentalism itself is implicated in colonialism. Clark insightfully argues that in terms of postcolonial thought and ecocriticism, "it is ecocriticism that first seems the more in need of revision. For, to many people, modern environmentalism can look like another form of colonialism" (120). Although this is by no means a new insight, comments like this show what Clark is good at: complicating

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issues and terms that are usually taken for granted. He also demonstrates this in respect to the term "regional novel".

In one of the boxes that are scattered around the work and that serve to concisely illuminate concepts and theories, Clark discusses methodological nationalism. This term, taken from A.D. Smith and used by Ulrich Beck, refers to the way in which many people still think on a regional or national scale, whereas such boundaries are often unfeasible and under pressure from increased globalization. Again, this is a point which is not new, and has been extensively discussed by ecocritics over the years. However, Clark rather originally uses this concept to question the term "regional novels". Innocent as the phrase may be, it "may instantiate methodological nationalism in proportion to the degree in which the national and its cultural agenda serve to enframe, contain and shape the analysis" (132).

In "science and the struggle for intellectual authority", the third part of *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, Clark seems to find it harder to make the connection between ecotheory and its applicability to the ecocritical study of literary texts. Consequently, the four chapters that make up the section mainly provide the kind of scientific background ecocritics, he believes, should be aware of. As Clark remarks towards the end of this part, ecocritics are faced with "the challenge of scientific illiteracy" (176) which these chapters aim to remedy. Finally, the fourth part of the work provides a succinct overview of issues in animal studies and ecocriticism, such as animal interpretation and the tension between animal suffering and ecological managerialism. Clark's introduction concludes with a chapter on the future of ecocriticism. His suggestions are mainly on the level of ecotheory in general rather than ecocriticism specifically: the main challenge for the field, he proposes, is "the way environmental questions will continue to resist inherited structures of thought" (203). Furthermore, he notes that the term "environmental" itself is so frequently and variedly used that it is "perpetually in danger of dissolving" (ibid.).

Yet the most interesting aspect of this brief final chapter on ecocriticism's future is the "quandary" that Clark sketches here. The inset sections that Clark calls quandaries are, as he says, "open invitations to further thought" (xiii), which may also very well be used for discussion in a classroom setting. Here, on the final page of the study, Clark questions the place of environmental criticism in the "modern 'University of Excellence'" (203), since, quoting David Orr, "the planet does not need more successful people" (ibid.). This interesting issue would certainly have deserved further attention, particularly given the budget cuts and calls for increased efficiency affecting universities throughout Europe.

One of the strongest points of this introduction to ecocriticism is its scope: Clark is ambitious in the number of themes he covers, as well as in the texts he draws on, which range far beyond the typical secondary works usually referenced by ecocritics. At the same time, the breadth of *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* also negatively affects its focus: among all the different themes that Clark discusses there does not really seem to be a clear overarching structure to the chapters

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or sections. Furthermore, particularly because Clark is so critical of ecocriticism, I would have welcomed a more critical view towards the texts he analyzes, as well. Although he argues for more attention to fiction, for instance, he does not question ecocriticism's traditional focus on explicitly environmentalist literature, rather than more "mainstream" works.

In fact, the literary dimension of Clark's discussion is somewhat neglected throughout *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, even though in his definition of ecocriticism he explicitly mentions the field's concern with literature. With regard to the question of ecocriticism's relation to literary criticism, this study consequently falls short: apart from the chapter on genre, and the occasional aside on the fairly narrow canon of ecocriticism, no mention is made of the role that aspects of, for instance, literary analysis play in ecocriticism. Clark aims to ground ecocriticism firmly in cultural theory, and consequently – although drawing on literary texts – presents the reader with an introduction to the broader field of *ecotheory*, rather than *literary ecocriticism*. On the one hand, this scope leads to much more far-reaching and in-depth analyses of past and contemporary environmental themes than an exclusively literary introduction would. On the other, however, the breadth of this work may be baffling to the ecocritical novice at whom, it could be argued, the introduction is aimed. Although he situates literary ecocriticism within a larger cultural framework, Clark is not always successful at translating the relevance of ecotheory for the ecocritical literary study of texts. For instance, although the chapter on science studies provides insights into this field, the applicability or function of science studies for ecocriticism – apart from acting as mere "background knowledge" – remains unclear.

Despite it being an introduction, the book is generally strongest and most interesting when it transcends the level of a mere introduction to the field. For instance, Clark makes a useful distinction between contextual and metacontextual criticism in order to demonstrate the uniqueness of ecocriticism. Whereas the former is concerned with placing a text in its cultural or cultural-historical context, the latter – including ecocriticism – opens "on issues that may involve perspectives or questions for which given cultural conceptions seem limited" (4). Another interesting point is made later on in the work when Clark explains ecocriticism's position in cultural theory, suggesting that "the method of much twenty-first century ecocriticism is effectively simply that of mainstream cultural criticism, that is, to map out the cultural politics of some issue or concern, usually from an implicitly liberal/progressive viewpoint" (89). Yet despite this comment, which comes rather late in the book, this introduction is probably most useful not for the ecocritical beginner, but for the reader who is already familiar with the field, and relatively well-versed in critical and cultural theory in general. In this respect, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* is a valuable contribution to existing ecocritical work, and continues where introductory texts such as Garrard's *Ecocriticism* left off.

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